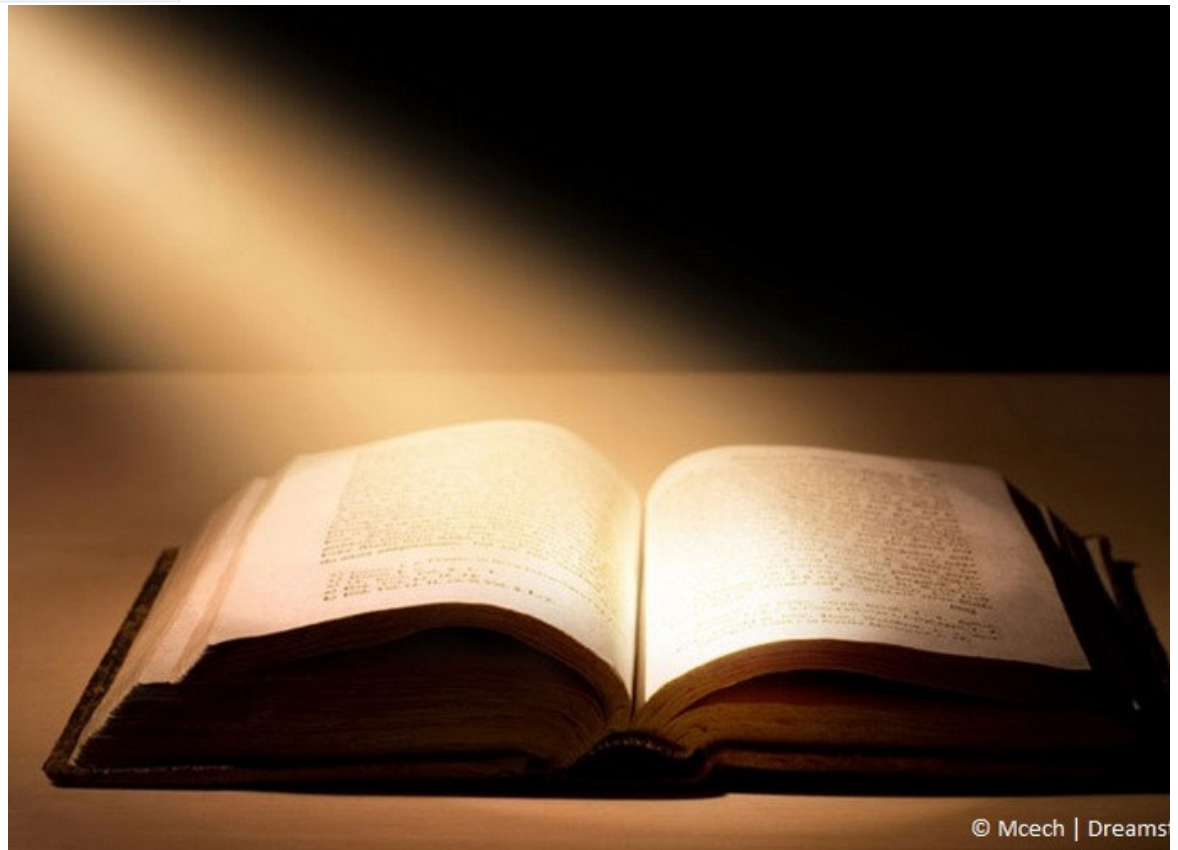


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Acts of charity

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05_06_2021



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As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely." Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to

him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on." (Mark 12: 38-44)

Unlike human justice, God's Justice does not measure our appearances, but rather our hearts. The hearts of those who give away their surplus wealth to help the poor are not so burdened. Moreover, there is the risk of hypocritically acting in such ways, which while in themselves involve just deeds, that are really done for the vanity of being admired. Jesus said that in doing acts of charity, the left hand must not know what the right hand is doing. In other words, each of us must humbly seek anonymity when performing acts of material and spiritual charity.